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LB 886

needs, for instance, in Clay and Webster and Furnace County and some of the counties up in the Sandhills are certainly not the same as they are in Omaha, Nebraska or Douglas County. I will quit with that. I urge you not to pass the committee amendments because they do gut the bill.

SPEAKER NICHOL: Senator Vard Johnson. Senator Johnson, while you are getting prepared, may I introduce some guests of Senator Rod Johnson.

SENATOR V. JOHNSON: Yes, of course.

SPEAKER NICHOL: In the north balcony there are 23 Twelfth Graders from Giltner, Nebraska High School and their teacher is Mike Howard. Would you please stand and be recognized. Thank you, Senator Vard Johnson.

SENATOR V. JOHNSON: Mr. Speaker and members of the body, I rise in support of the committee amendments. For over one hundred years the State of Nebraska has required its 93 counties to have a medically indigent program. The original law used to require a county to have a county physician and the county physician would treat the medically indigent. In some of the larger counties such as Douglas County, the county ultimately satisfied its obligation to treat the medically indigent by establishing a county hospital which it operated for many years as a full-fledged hospital. However, in the 1960's with the development of the Medicaid program, the federal Medicaid program and the state's participation in the Medicaid program, it no longer was necessary for the counties to maintain as strong a medically indigent program as state law once required. And as a result what we discovered over the long pull is that the 93 counties began to slip away from any kind of a medical indigency program so that in some counties there simply was no medically indigent program whatsoever. They didn't take care of anybody who was sick and poor. It just wasn't done. So what has happened over the last couple of years with the state assumption of all county welfare responsibilities is the state has assumed all county welfare responsibilities except two. The first one it did not assume was the ancient poor relief law known as general assistance. And the second